Draft Environmental Assessment

KOHRS BEND FISHING ACCESS SITE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

March 2017

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region 2
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Kohrs Bend Fishing Access Site Improvement Project
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Proposed State Action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to improve its Kohrs Bend Fishing Access Site (FAS) located along the Upper Clark Fork River in Powell County, north of Deer Lodge. The improvements would occur in two phases. Phase I would be completed in 2017. Phase II would be completed later due to the additional time required for design and permitting. The improvements would accommodate the anticipated increase in public recreational use and improve soil stability, vegetation, and streambank stabilization at the site. Following is a list of the proposed improvements:

Phase I

- Improve the existing gravel roads and parking spaces with additional gravel and grading.
- Install an additional 13 truck/trailer gravel parking spaces.
- Install a gravel boat ramp.
- Install a concrete latrine with gravel walking paths from the parking spaces to the latrine.
- Install a security gate at the entrance of the FAS to allow for vehicular closure during wet periods of the year.
- Install fencing with turnstiles and a cattle guard to restrict cattle while still allowing for pedestrian access.

Phase II

- Improve protection of the riverbank along a section of the Upper Clark Fork River located south of the Kohrs Bend Fishing Access Road using a more natural method of streambank stabilization.

2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:

- Section 23-2-101, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), authorizes FWP to plan and develop outdoor recreational resources in Montana.
- Section 87-1-605, MCA, authorizes FWP to use a portion of fishing license fees for the purchase, operation, development, and maintenance of fishing access sites.
- Section 23-1-110, MCA, states that any improvements that will significantly change FAS site features must meet certain public involvement and reporting requirements. This proposal would result in a significant change, as defined in the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.8.602. See Appendix A for the Project Qualification Checklist.
- ARM, 12.8.701 designates certain fishing access sites as “primitive access sites” with a low level of development. ARM, 12.8.703 lists Kohrs Bend as a primitive access site and ARM, 12.8.709 lists the allowed improvements.
- This proposal meets these sections of the MCA and ARM.

3. **Name of Project:** Kohrs Bend Fishing Access Site Improvement Project

4. Project Sponsor:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 2
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

5. Anticipated Schedule for Phase I (Phase II would follow after necessary design and permitting)**:**

Estimated Public Comment Period: March-April 2017

Estimated Decision Notice: early April 2017

Estimated Commencement Date: September-October 2017

Estimated Completion Date: December 2017

Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 65%

6. Location:

Kohrs Bend FAS is located between the Upper Clark Fork River and Interstate 90 approximately 7 miles north of Deer Lodge, Montana in Powell County (Figures 1, 2, and 3). The FAS is in Township 9 North, Range 9 West, Sections 28 and 33.

Figure 1. General location of Kohrs Bend FAS in Powell County, Montana.

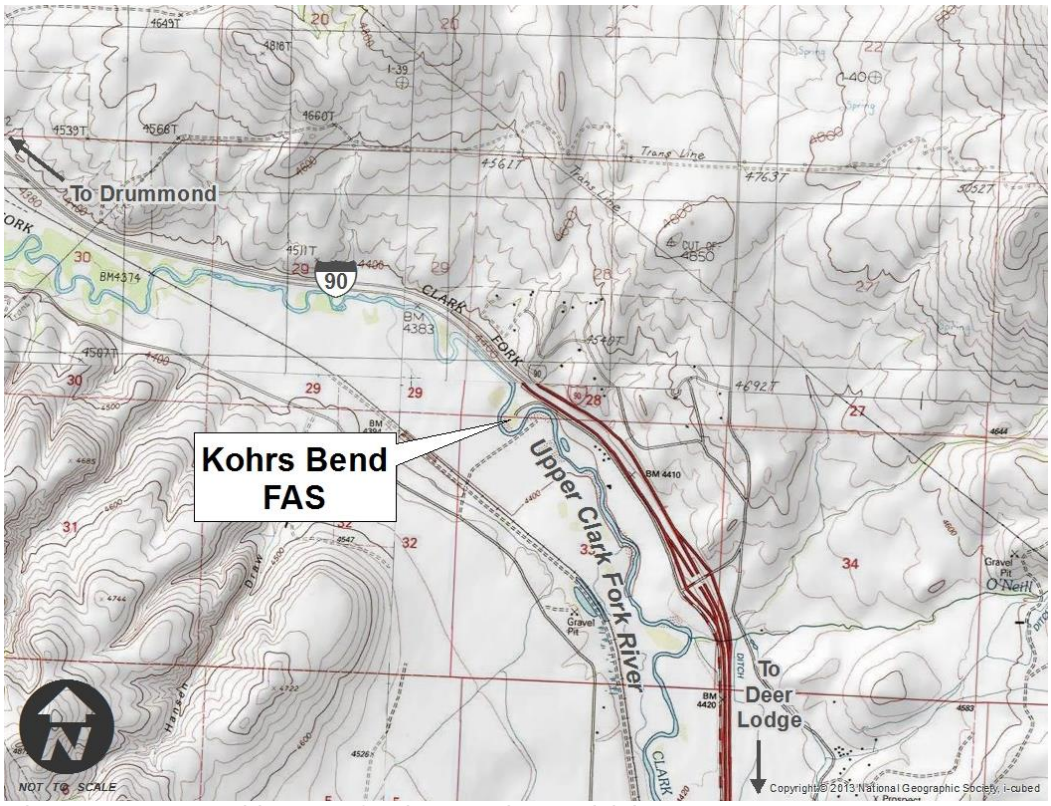

Figure 2. Topographic map of Kohrs Bend FAS vicinity.

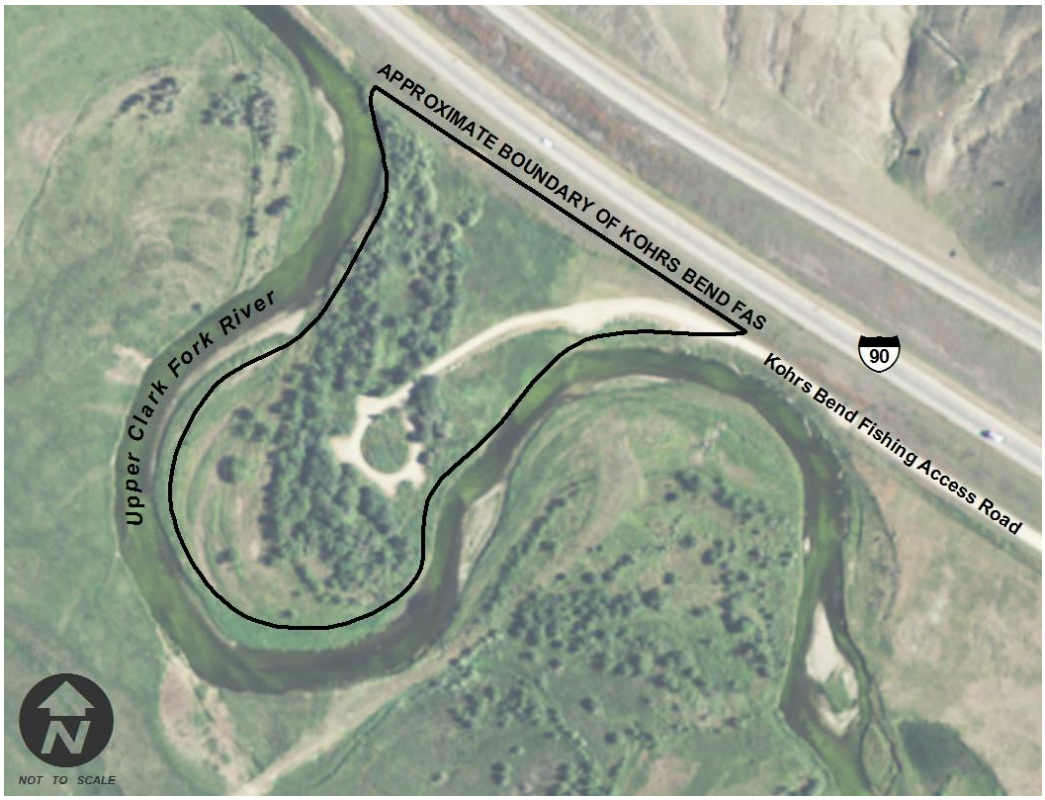

Figure 3. Aerial photograph of Kohrs Bend FAS

7. Project size:

Kohrs Bend FAS is owned by FWP, currently used as a fishing access site, and encompasses an estimated 8.1 acres. The estimated area that would be impacted by the proposed improvements is less than 1 acre.

Land Type	Affected Area (estimated in acres)
Developed:	
Residential	0
Industrial	0
Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	<1
Wetlands/Riparian Areas (MNHP 2014)	<1
Floodplain (FEMA 1981)	<1
Productive:	
Irrigated Cropland	0
Dry Cropland	0
Forestry	0
Rangeland	0
Other	0

8. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction:

(a) Permits:

Agency	**Permit**
FWP	SPA 124 Permit (Montana Stream Protection Act)
U.S. Corps of Engineers	Section 404 Permit (Federal Clean Water Act), Section 10 Permit (Federal Rivers and Harbors Act)
Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)	318 Authorization (Short-term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity)
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)	Montana Land-Use License or Easement on Navigable Waters
Powell County	Floodplain Permit, Septic System Permit

(b) Funding: This proposed project would be funded by a grant from the Montana Department of Justice - Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP). The NRDP uses settlement dollars resulting from the State of Montana's lawsuit against the Atlantic Richfield Company to improve natural resources.

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency	Type of Responsibility
State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Cultural clearance (Appendix B)
Powell County Weed Management	Weed management coordination
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Endangered Species Act, Bald & Golden Eagle Protection Act, and Migratory Bird Treaty Act
Montana Department of Environmental Quality	Environmental remediation efforts

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Kohrs Bend FAS is a primitive access site located about 7 miles north of Deer Lodge on the Upper Clark Fork River. From Interstate 90 (Exit 179, Beck Hill Road), the FAS can be accessed by traveling northwest approximately 0.8 mile on the North Frontage Road (which is south of the Interstate) to the Kohrs Bend Fishing Access Road. The FAS currently consists of a dirt entry road and approximately 8 dirt parking spaces. Recreational users typically park on the North Frontage Road and use the armored bank just south of the FAS entrance for boat access (Jason Lindstrom, FWP, personal communication, 11 March 2015). Soil and vegetation at the site has been disturbed by foot and vehicle traffic, as well as cattle grazing. There are no toilet facilities at the site, which is a public health concern.

In the past, this has not been a high-use site. Historic mining activity in Butte and Anaconda released hazardous waste into the river. In 1983, the Clark Fork River Basin was listed as a Superfund Site by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. As part of a settlement with the Atlantic Richfield Company, the State of Montana set up a fund, administered by the Montana Department of Justice's Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP), and developed a plan to restore natural resources in the Clark Fork River Basin.

The *Final Upper Clark Fork River Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans (NRDP 2016)* outlines the proposed restoration actions. Section 5 of the plan focuses on recreation and states, "that by restoring or replacing the injured natural resources of the [Upper Clark Fork River Basin], some of the recreational services lost due to those injuries will also be restored" (NRDP 2012, p 5-1). Improvements to the Upper Clark Fork River fishing access sites, including Kohrs Bend FAS, are listed as proposed actions in the plan. Kohrs Bend FAS was selected for improvements because it would help establish reasonable float distances between FAS sites along the Upper Clark Fork River, is an existing site that would benefit from restoration work, and is located in an area where use is expected to increase.

Proposed improvements for Phase I at Kohrs Bend FAS include adding gravel and grading existing gravel surfaces, and constructing additional length of road and parking spaces. This would ensure there is adequate parking, decrease erosion, increase soil stability, and improve the road for wet conditions.

The gravel boat ramp would be installed in the transition zone between where the river erodes the bank and deposits sediment. This would provide safe access for boats and reduce future maintenance costs. Installation of a concrete latrine would provide for the proper disposal of human waste, in accordance with local and state sanitation regulations. Gravel walking paths from the parking areas to the latrine would protect soils and vegetation. A security gate installed at the

entrance would allow FWP to close the site during wet periods, avoiding damage to the roads. There are trespassing cattle that graze the interior of the FAS. Fencing with turnstiles and a cattle guard would keep cattle out of the interior portion of the FAS and away from vegetation, vehicles, and users.

There is a section of armored bank along the Upper Clark Fork River just south of the Kohrs Bend Fishing Access Road. As part of Phase II, the proposal is to protect the streambank with a more natural method of streambank stabilization.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If no action is taken, foot, vehicle, and boat traffic, as well as cattle, would continue to degrade soils and vegetation at the site. Without designated areas for specific use, pioneered areas would likely continue to be expanded over time, and could increase the spread of noxious weeds. There would continue to be a lack of sanitation facilities. Without the addition of a gravel boat ramp, users would continue to use the armored bank, further eroding the bank and potentially making it unsafe. Vehicles towing trailers often park along this section of the river causing a traffic hazard during times of high use. Trespassing cattle would continue to access the FAS. If no action is taken, the current facilities would not support an increase in users as is anticipated due to the improvement of water quality and fishing opportunity. FWP would continue to provide general site maintenance and enforcement patrols at the FAS.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

FWP proposes to improve Kohrs Bend FAS in two phases, as previously described in Section 9, using NRDP funds. Phase I of the project would benefit users by providing a safer site for boat access and fishing. With the restoration efforts occurring along the Upper Clark Fork River, it is anticipated that the number of users at fishing access sites would increase. Additionally, the proposed improvements at Kohrs Bend FAS would accommodate this increase. Designated areas for use would decrease soil erosion, increase soil stability, allow vegetation to thrive, decrease the spread of noxious weeds, and provide for the proper disposal of human waste.

Phase II of the project would improve a section of bank along the Upper Clark Fork River. Protection of the riverbank would be designed using a more natural method of streambank stabilization. This would increase soil stability and improve fish habitat.

FWP would continue to provide general site maintenance and enforcement patrols at the FAS. The proposed improvements would be maintained within the existing maintenance budget.

11. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

FWP would employ *Best Management Practices for Fishing Access Sites* (hereafter, *BMPs*; Appendix C) during design and construction, which are designed to reduce or eliminate the impacts of construction on fish and wildlife. FWP would develop the final design and specifications for the proposed action. FWP would meet county, state, and federal regulations and obtain applicable permits.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			X		YES	1a
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		YES	1b
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		YES	1d
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1a. About 85% of Kohrs Bend FAS is covered by the soils map unit listed as *Aquents-Slickens complex, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded* and about 15% is listed as *Tetonview-Blossberg loams, 0 to 4 percent slopes, rarely flooded* (NRCS 2014). The current and proposed use of the property is a recreational fishing access site. Facility design and construction would utilize FWP's *BMPs* to reduce impacts on soil (Appendix C). Construction associated with the improvements would temporarily impact topsoil, but would not affect geologic substructure. After construction, FWP would plant native vegetation in disturbed areas to stabilize the soil. In addition, the proposed improvements provide improvements to direct future foot, vehicle, and boat traffic, further protecting soil and vegetation at the site.

Recreational users are currently parking on the Kohrs Bend Fishing Access Road and using the armored section of bank for boat access (Jason Lindstrom, FWP, Personal Communication, 11 March 2015). Placement of a gravel boat ramp at a different location within the FAS, realigning the entrance road away from the eroding bank, and protecting the riverbank using a more natural method of streambank stabilization would improve soil stability along this section of the Upper Clark Fork River.

1b. There would be minimal impacts to the soil during construction. Disturbed areas would be seeded with a native seed mix to minimize erosion, sediment delivery to the Upper Clark Fork River, and the spread of noxious weeds. Users have trampled soil and vegetation at the site because there are few improvements to direct foot, vehicle, and boat traffic. The proposed improvements would establish a boat ramp, parking, latrine, and roads or paths to appropriately direct recreational use. There would be a reduction in vegetation and soil disturbance resulting in increased productivity and fertility.

1d. The proposed boat ramp would be located in a transition zone of slack water between where the river erodes the bank and deposits sediment. This would ensure that the boat ramp does not increase erosion and impact the current pattern of the river. There may be a minor amount of sedimentation resulting from construction. FWP would utilize the *BMPs* to reduce sedimentation (Appendix C) and perform work during periods of low water flow in the river. The proposed streambank stabilization would decrease bank erosion along a section of the Upper Clark Fork River.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		YES	2a
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		YES	2b
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.)		NA				

2a. There would be minor, short-term impacts to air quality due to dust and odors generated during construction. If the site is particularly dry during construction, water may be applied to control dust.

2b. There may be odors associated with construction equipment, but these would be minor and short-term. A concrete vault latrine would be installed and maintained regularly to avoid excessively offensive odors. A county septic permit would be obtained prior to installation.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		YES	3a
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		YES	3b
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				3c
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?			X		YES	3h
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		NA				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		NA				

3a. The proposed improvements may cause a temporary, localized increase in turbidity in the Upper Clark Fork River. FWP would obtain a Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 318 Authorization Permit for Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity. FWP's *BMPs* would be followed during all phases of design and construction (Appendix C). The latrine would meet county sanitation requirements and provide for the proper disposal of human waste, positively impacting water quality.

3b. There may be a short-term increase in run-off during construction. Proposed roads, paths, and the boat ramp would be designed and constructed following the *BMPs* to minimize runoff into the river (Appendix C).

3c. The proposed boat ramp is sited in a transition zone between where the river erodes the bank and where the river deposits sediment to ensure the boat ramp would not affect the flow of the river. This location also provides slack water to make it safer for boat access.

3h. The use of heavy equipment during construction may result in a slight risk of contamination from petroleum products and a temporary increase in sediment delivery to the Upper Clark Fork River. FWP would follow the *BMPs* during all phases of design and construction to minimize risks (Appendix C). The latrine would be located outside the floodplain and meet all sanitation regulations, providing the proper disposal for human waste.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		YES	4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X		YES	4c
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				4d
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		YES	4e
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		NA				
g. Other:		NA				

4a. Most of Kohrs Bend FAS is covered by riparian and wetland vegetation associated with the Upper Clark Fork River with some native grasses and noxious weeds. There would be disturbance to vegetation at the site during construction of the proposed improvements, but overall the proposal would result in a positive impact to vegetation by directing use to designated areas. The proposed locations of roads, parking spaces, and the boat ramp were designed to reduce disturbance to vegetation.

Disturbed areas would be seeded with native grasses following *BMPs* (Appendix C). At a site visit on March 11, 2015, there was evidence that cattle had trampled and grazed vegetation at the FAS. The proposed fencing would restrict cattle from the FAS property increasing the diversity, productivity, and abundance of plant species. The proposed boat ramp, parking, latrine, and roads/paths would direct people to certain areas, allowing vegetation to thrive in areas away from improvements.

4c. There are no threatened or endangered plant species known to inhabit the site or area. Idaho Sedge is listed as a Species of Concern for this area by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (Appendix D). It would be rare to find Idaho Sedge at this site because most occurrences in Montana are located in the higher valleys of southwest Montana at elevations above 6,000 feet (MNHP 2015). In addition, the proposed improvements would direct recreational use to designated areas ultimately improving vegetation at the site.

4d. The site is not in agricultural production and the soil map units that cover the property are not listed as prime farmland (NRCS 2014).

4e. There are currently noxious weeds at the site that are managed in accordance with FWP's *Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan* (MFWP 2008). Weeds are typically sprayed every year or every other year. Prevailing weeds at the site include leafy spurge and hounds-tongue (Dustin Hadnot, FWP, personal communication, 22 April 2015). The proposed improvements would temporarily increase the risk of noxious weeds spreading throughout the site because of the soil disturbance and vegetation removal associated with construction. Planting native vegetation after construction in accordance with the *Best Management Practices for Fishing Access Sites*, and continuing to manage weeds would mitigate these minimal impacts. In addition, by installing facilities to better direct foot, vehicle, and boat traffic to designated areas, this proposed project would ultimately improve the site's vegetation and reduce the spread of noxious weeds.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?			X		YES	5a
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X		YES	5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X		YES	5c
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X		YES	5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		YES	5g
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		NA				
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		NA				

5a. The Upper Clark Fork River is mapped as critical habitat for bull trout (USFWS 2015). Bull trout is a Montana Species of Concern and listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. There may be localized short-term impacts to habitat during construction, but the completed project would improve habitat by directing users to designated areas and protecting a section of streambank with a more natural method of streambank stabilization.

5b, 5c. There is a diversity and abundance of game, nongame, and bird species that use the site because of the river and associated riparian areas. The proposed locations of roads, parking spaces, and the boat ramp were designed to result in as little vegetation disturbance as possible. Disturbed areas would be seeded with native vegetation following *BMPs* (Appendix C). In addition, Kohrs Bend FAS is in antelope and moose winter range. This proposal would not affect winter range because construction would occur during the spring, summer or fall.

There would be no long-term changes to the diversity and abundance of fish and wildlife because the property would continue to be used as a fishing access site. Noise and activity may cause fish and wildlife to avoid the area during construction, but this would be a short-term, temporary impact. By installing improvements to direct users to designated areas, the proposed improvements would ultimately benefit fish and wildlife by reducing the degradation of habitat.

5f. The only threatened or endangered species listed for this area is the bull trout. Species of Concern for the FAS and a surrounding one-mile area include the great blue heron, bald eagle, long-billed curlew, westslope cutthroat trout, little brown myotis, and hoary bat (Appendix D). Noise and activity associated with construction may cause fish and wildlife to avoid the area. This would be a minor, temporary impact. By installing improvements to direct users to designated areas, the proposed improvements would ultimately benefit fish and wildlife by reducing the degradation of habitat.

5g. With the improvements to the FAS, there may be an increase in users. Like any other FAS or recreational area, an increase in users increases the risk that some users could harass or stress fish and wildlife. Continued enforcement of FAS and game regulations would mitigate that risk.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		YES	6a
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?			X		YES	6b
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

6a, 6b. Kohrs Bend FAS is in a rural area along Interstate 90. There would be no long-term impacts of the proposed improvements on noise levels as the use would remain as a fishing access site. During construction, there would be a minor increase in noise levels. The distance between the FAS and the nearest residence on the same side of the highway is approximately 1/3 of a mile. Across the highway to the northwest, there is a subdivision with an estimated 14 residences, but the noise associated with construction would be screened by the noise from highway traffic.

This is a relatively quiet FAS that does not have many enforcement issues (Joe Kambic, FWP, personal communication, 13 April 2015). With the proposed improvements and potential for increased use, an increase in noise levels or disturbance to area residences is not anticipated.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?			X		YES	7a
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

7a. The proposed action would not change the land use as the property would remain a fishing access site. There may be a temporary inconvenience to recreationists during construction, but overall the proposed improvements could increase the use and profitability of the site. There is commercial use of the FAS by fishing guides and outfitters (Jason Lindstrom, FWP, personal communication, March 11, 2015). The improvements to the FAS could increase use of the site by fishing guides and outfitters providing guided fishing trips. Increased use of Kohrs Bend FAS and Upper Clark Fork River could bring additional tourism benefits to the Deer Lodge and Garrison area.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		YES	8a
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		YES	8c
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		NA				

8a. As with any construction project, there would be a minor risk of explosion or release of hazardous substances associated with this project. The use of heavy equipment during construction may result in a slight risk of contamination from petroleum products and a temporary increase in sediment delivery to the Upper Clark Fork River. FWP would follow the *BMPs* during all phases of construction to minimize risks (Appendix C).

The Upper Clark Fork River is listed as a Superfund Site due to contamination from historic mining activity. DEQ would inspect the site for contamination prior to construction and perform remediation as necessary.

Physical disturbance to the soil during construction would increase the risk of noxious weeds spreading on the site. This may increase the need to manage weeds with biological, mechanical, and herbicidal treatments. The use of herbicides would follow application guidelines to minimize the risk of chemical spills or water contamination, and would be applied by professionals.

8c. Currently, there are no toilet facilities at the site. The installation of a concrete vault latrine would improve public health and safety by providing for the proper disposal of human waste. FWP would use a local contractor to provide routine maintenance of the latrine. The proposal also includes a boat ramp, which would provide a safer boat access to the Upper Clark Fork River. This proposal would ultimately improve public health and safety, reducing the likelihood for hazards.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?			X		YES	9c
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?			X		YES	9d
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				

9c, 9d. The proposed improvements could increase the commercial use of the FAS by fishing guides, outfitters, and tourists. This would positively impact local employment and incomes. The Montana Department of Tourism reviewed the proposal and determined the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy if it is properly maintained (Appendix E). FWP has adequate funding to continue to maintain the site.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:			X		YES	10a
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?			X		YES	10d
e. Define projected revenue sources			X			10e
f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				10f

10a. Development of the site and addition of a latrine would require slightly more effort by existing maintenance staff to keep the area clean and sanitary. Existing staff would incorporate these additional tasks into their work routines. Costs associated with additional maintenance efforts can be accommodated within existing budgets.

10d. There would be a temporary increase in energy use during construction. Impacts would be minimal and short-term.

10e. There may be additional FWP revenue that indirectly results from this project in the form of increased fishing licenses and commercial use permits. Site-specific access fees are not charged to the public for use of this FAS (i.e., lacking overnight camping, there would be no camping fees collected).

10f. Maintenance at the site includes labor, equipment, rock, gravel, mowing, supplies, and a contracted caretaker. Average annual maintenance costs are estimated at $3,000 (Dustin Hadnot, FWP, personal communication, April 15, 2015). The proposed improvements are not anticipated to increase maintenance costs.

Based on FWP's experience with designing fishing access sites, the most sustainable location for a boat ramp is at the transition zone between erosion and deposition. The proposed locations for improvements were designed to extend the life of the infrastructure and reduce future maintenance costs while also reducing impacts on the environment.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		YES	11a
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X		YES	11c
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		NA				

11a. The proposed work would be in public view from Interstate 90 and from users of the site during construction. This would be a temporary, short-term impact. In the long-term, this project would benefit the view by providing for the proper disposal of human waste and generally cleaning up the site.

11c. As remediation and restoration efforts continue on the Upper Clark Fork River, it is anticipated that habitat and fish populations will improve. The cumulative impact of the proposed improvements at Kohrs Bend FAS and future improvements at other sites along the Upper Clark Fork River would be an increase in recreational use and tourism. Currently, the site is designed for wading anglers. The proposed road, additional parking spaces, and boat ramp would provide boat access. The boat ramp was designed to make boat access as easy as possible for users. The tourism report is attached as Appendix E.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		NA				

12. The Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) conducted a cultural resource file search and found no previously recorded sites (Appendix B). SHPO stated that a cultural resource inventory is not warranted. If cultural materials were discovered during construction, work would cease and SHPO would be contacted for further investigation.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		NA				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		NA				

13. During construction of the proposed project, there may be minor and temporary impacts to the physical and human environment. These minimal impacts would be outweighed by the long-term positive impacts of this project. The proposed improvements would enhance Kohrs Bend FAS by designating areas for foot, vehicular, and boat traffic. This would allow native vegetation to thrive and reduce the spread of noxious weeds. The latrine would improve public health and safety by providing for the proper disposal of human waste. Protecting the riverbank using a more natural method of streambank stabilization along a stretch of the Upper Clark Fork River would improve habitat. Fencing would keep cattle away from vegetation, parked vehicles, and users. A gravel boat ramp would provide a safe boat access for recreationists. The proposed locations for improvements were designed to extend the life of the infrastructure and reduce future maintenance costs while also reducing impacts on the environment.

    There are many restoration projects occurring along the Upper Clark Fork River to address the negative effects on natural resources of historic mining. As the Upper Clark Fork River, floodplain, and adjacent riparian areas are improved, the cumulative impact of the proposed improvements at Kohrs Bend FAS and other restoration efforts would be improved fish populations and habitat. It is anticipated that there would be an increase in users due to better fishing opportunities and enhanced recreational opportunities. FWP plans to improve existing fishing access sites and add new fishing access sites to create reasonable float distances for the anticipated increase in demand. The proposed improvements at Kohrs Bend FAS in conjunction with improvements to other fishing access sites would have the cumulative impact of increasing the recreational use and enjoyment of the Upper Clark Fork River.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

Historic mining activity in the region degraded natural resources along the Upper Clark Fork River. Recent and planned remediation efforts are improving fish and wildlife habitat. The *Final Upper Clark Fork River Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans* document states: "By improving fisheries or wildlife populations and habitats, the proposed actions in the aquatic and terrestrial resources restoration plans will improve associated fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, and other recreational services." (NRDP 2012, p 5-1). The Montana Department of Justice - Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) set aside funding to enhance recreation along the Upper Clark Fork River based on an anticipated increase in demand.

Using NRDP funding, FWP is proposing improvements to approximately 10 sites along the Upper Clark Fork River. The network of improved fishing access sites would establish reasonable float distances between sites, enhance or restore existing sites, and secure public access. The benefits would include decreased resource degradation, prevention of pioneered use, increased economic activity in local communities, and additional opportunities for safe and enjoyable public recreation.

Kohrs Bend FAS, located about 7 miles north of Deer Lodge, is an important site in the overall plan to increase recreational activities and restoration along the Upper Clark Fork River. This is an existing, primitive FAS with a dirt road and several parking spaces, but no boat ramp, toilet facilities, or designated areas for use. The lack of improvements has led to pioneered use of foot, vehicle, and boat traffic (as well as trespassing cattle), trampling soils and vegetation. The proposed improvements, including graveled roads, increased parking spaces, gravel boat ramp, concrete latrine, cattle guard, fencing with turnstiles, and bank stabilization, would enhance the site. Designated use areas would protect soils, allow vegetation to thrive, and help prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

There would be minimal short-term negative impacts to the physical and human environment during construction of the improvements, as discussed in Part II (Environmental Review Checklist). FWP would mitigate these minimal impacts by using the *BMPs* (Appendix C) and securing the appropriate permits. Once construction is completed, the improvements would ultimately benefit soils, air, water, vegetation, fish, wildlife, aesthetics, recreation, the local economy, and the community. The proposed locations for improvements were designed to extend the life of the infrastructure and reduce future maintenance costs while also reducing impacts on the environment. The minimal, short-term, negative impacts during construction are expected to be outweighed by the long-term benefits of the proposed improvements to Kohrs Bend FAS. The cumulative impacts of Kohrs Bend FAS and the proposed improvements to other fishing access sites along the Upper Clark Fork River would be increased restoration, recreation, and economic development.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following ways to comment on the Kohrs Bend FAS Proposed Improvement Project, the Proposed Action and alternatives (the Draft EA):

- Two legal notices in each of these newspapers: the *Missoulian,* the *Independent Record* (Helena), and the *Silver State Post* (respectively, Region 2's newspaper of record, FWP's newspaper of record, and the local newspaper).
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: http://fwp.mt.gov ("News," then "Recent Public Notices"). The Draft EA will also be available on this website, along with the opportunity to submit comments online.
- Copies of the Draft EA will be available at the Region 2 headquarters in Missoula and the State Headquarters in Helena.

- A news release will be prepared and distributed to a standard list of media outlets interested in FWP Region 2 issues. This news release will also be posted on Region 2 FWP's website http://fwp.mt.gov/regions/r2/.
- Copies of this environmental assessment will be mailed (or notification of its availability emailed) to neighboring landowners and other interested parties (individuals, groups, agencies) to ensure their knowledge of the Proposed Action.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having no significant physical or human impacts and only minor limited impacts, which can be mitigated.

If requested within the comment period, FWP will schedule and conduct a public meeting on this proposed action.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for 30 days. Written and verbal comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., April 6, 2017. Comments should be addressed to Sharon Rose using the mailing address, email address, and/or phone number listed below.

Mailing Address: Region 2 FWP
Attn: Sharon Rose
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Email Address: shrose@mt.gov

Phone Number: Sharon Rose (406) 542-5540

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?

No

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

Based on an analysis of the impacts of the proposed improvements to the physical and human environment under the Montana Environmental Policy Act, there would be no significant negative impacts resulting from the proposed action. An Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of environmental review and an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. While there would be minor, temporary negative impacts during construction, the project would ultimately benefit the physical and human environment.

2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Rory Zarling
FWP Region 2 FAS Manager
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
rzarling@mt.gov
(406) 542-5561

Renee Lemon
Planning and Policy Specialist
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
rlemon@mt.gov
(406) 444-3738

3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

List of Agencies

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (Design and Construction, Fisheries Division, Wildlife Division, Enforcement Division)

Montana Natural Heritage Program

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

Natural Resource Damage Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services

REFERENCES

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U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service. Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) database for Powell County Area, Montana. September 3, 2014. http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov. Accessed 9 April 2015.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS). Critical Habitat Mapper. http://ecos.fws.gov/crithab/. Accessed 14 April 2015.

APPENDICES (separate file)

A. Project Qualification Checklist (§ 23-1-110, MCA)
B. State Historic Preservation Office (cultural clearance)
C. Best Management Practices for Fishing Access Sites
D. Species of Concern (Montana Natural Heritage Program)
E. Montana Office of Tourism Report
F. Preliminary Conceptual Site Plan